



Seven Human Resourcing Limited
Preparing for Interview

Before the Interview

Research the Employer

Thoroughly research the organisation to impress those you meet and allow more time to tell your story and discuss specifics of the position. Some of the information that you will need to know includes:

- Size of organisation
- location of sites, stores, factories
- structure of organisation - by product line, function, past, current & potential growth
- clients, customers, markets (existing and future)
- product lines or services
- price of products or services
- present price of stock – performance
- the competition and how they are performing
- name of recruiter – their role in the recruitment process and decision making, their interview style and what they are like
- the other interviewers – their role in the recruitment process and decision making, their interview style and what they are like
- training provisions and career options
- recent items in the news
- wider market issues - research issues, trends, and problems. Good sources for this are people in the field the internet, trade journals, and colleagues.

Store visits

Are very important. Interviewers want to see that you have done your research, they like people to have ideas and opinions. There is nothing more disappointing than meeting a candidate who doesn't seem interested in the role / company / industry that they are moving into.

Store visits are a useful exercise to be able to consider the products, packaging and competition.

Assess your strengths and weaknesses against the brief

If the client has a job description or person specification we should have provided you with it (please tell us if you have not received this). Likewise if the business has a competence framework that they use to assess potential employees you should read it.

At the very least you will need to know the role, responsibilities and the challenges that you will face in the role as well as what you are expected to achieve in this role.

If we can we will also inform you of what the company is looking for in the interviews – what questions will they ask and what skills / experiences are they looking for.

Know yourself

Analyse your strengths and weaknesses against the brief.

Know your strengths and prepare exactly what you want to highlight. Reflect on your weaker areas and be prepared to overcome any reservations. Previous interview feedback may help you here.

Evaluate any problem areas in your track record and be prepared to offer a strong case for these during the interview, if necessary.

Competency based questions

Competency-based interviewing is a standardised method designed to elicit information from a candidate about relevant past behaviour and performance. The basis of behavioural interviewing is **'past behaviour as a predictor of future behaviour'**. The questions asked will relate specifically to experience.

During a competency based interview, you will be asked a series of standardised questions. With each answer, you'll be expected to describe examples of behaviours, which the interviewer will use to assess your proficiency in one or more job-related competencies.

These competencies can include anything from adaptability to leadership to problem solving.

The interviewer will also observe, but not question, your impact or physical presence and communication skills (both verbal and non-verbal).

Questions you should expect

You will be asked to describe specific situations that demonstrate your abilities in a requisite competency. Here are some examples of typical competency based questions and the competencies they demonstrate:

- Describe a difficult problem that you tried to solve. How did you identify the problem? How did you go about trying to solve it? (Demonstrates problem solving)
- Describe a time when you tried to persuade another person to do something that he/she was not very willing to do. (Demonstrates leadership)
- Describe a time when you decided on your own that something needed to be done, and you took on the task to get it done. (Demonstrates initiative)

Preparing for a competency based interview

- Know your CV. This might seem obvious, but your CV is often the basis for many questions. Identify the competencies that your CV demonstrates.
- Be able to draw from a variety of experiences that demonstrate your skills and abilities.
- Be familiar with the job for which you're interviewing. Establish the competencies that are required for success in the job and think of the components of your experience that best exemplify your abilities in those competencies.
- Develop a coherent and articulate SOAR (see below) narrative for each competency that you think you will be questioned.
- You should prepare at least one SOAR response for each bullet point on your CV.

The **SOAR model** helps frame the answers.

Scenario	Be brief and clear – build context for the story rather than all the detail.
Ownership	Clearly indicate the extent of influence you had in the example.
Action	Present the action you took in a structured well timed manner. You should identify key steps and avoid excessive detail.
Results	What did you achieve and how did this benefit the business?

Preparing for problem questions

"Tell me about you."

Try to find out what the interviewer is looking for. The issue here could be that you waffle.

This question is often asked to find out about skills but due to it allowing many possible answers you must be careful.

Answer it by describing your best qualifications for the job. Be specific and use examples to support the claims.

Go through the job / person specification and highlight your areas of strength relating to the role. If you are asked a very open question such as this you can then be specific to the job.

"How much do you expect/want to be paid?"

Never state a flat amount unless you know what the job pays. Here, you can either state what you are currently earning or refer this question to sevenhr. We will have outlined your expectations on the profile that we provide.

Another alternative is to throw the question back to them - "How much does the job pay?" "How much is a new employee usually paid?" "How much do you usually pay someone with my experience?"

"Why do you want to work for this company?"

The employer expects knowledge of and interest in their company. Give an answer that indicates that you have researched the company before the interview.

"Why did you leave/why are you leaving your job?"

The employer may be trying to find out any problems. Do not be too negative about the situation with your previous employer and always be positive about making the move.

"What are your future plans?"

The interviewer may want to see ambition, plans and set goals. They will also want to see real commitment to the role so suggesting that you see this as merely a stepping stone can be counter-productive.

Try not to be too aggressive. The answer; "I want your job" is not always welcomed.

During the interview

So before the interview you will have considered **what** you want to communicate and **how** you are going to communicate. You will want to communicate: personal qualities, functional skills, and special areas of knowledge that relate to the particular interviewer or organisation.

How you communicate these personal attributes and background facts is indicated by your attitude, non-verbal behaviours and verbal responses.

The first task will be to help to build rapport with the interviewer(s). The characteristics of building rapport involve...

1. **Attitude** – this should be one of openness and sensitivity to the interviewer's style. Take personal responsibility for creating a comfortable atmosphere, establishing a common ground – think positively. Even if you have reservations before the interview you should approach the interview as though it is the best job in the world. Any coolness or lack of enthusiasm is obvious to an interviewer and will ruin the chances of a second interview or job offer.
2. **The non-verbal behaviours** – contribute to rapport – these are dress and posture, eye contact, handshake, voice level, and gestures (see body language – below).
3. **The verbal behaviours** – contribute to building rapport – these include observations and initiation of discussion.

Body Language

You will want to convey sincerity, a dedication to achievement, confidence and a high energy level. These attributes are communicated through attitude and actions as well as through their verbal responses.

Consistency between the non-verbal and verbal messages is very important to an effective interview. The non-verbal behaviours that are important in an interview include:

- Eye contact which should be open and direct when listening, asking and responding to questions.
- Posture which should be well balanced, relaxed, straight-on and open. You may be aware of nervous habits – if so try to control them.
- Hands should be used in a relaxed way for animation, communicating excitement, interest.
- Voice tone which should be firm, warm, well-modulated and relaxed.
- Active listening which affects how you respond and communicate your interest.

Verbal Communication

- Use active verbs.
- Use concrete examples.
- Be concise and complete.
- Summarise and make transitions.
- Be positive and "own" what you have done and what you know.

Strong answers

A strong answer does not create more questions than it answers. The components of a strong answer include:

- Backing up a statement with a specific example.
- Sharing their role (the challenge and accomplishments).
- Sharing the outcome or solution.
- Summarising to emphasise their strengths.

Strong answers can also be described as frank, open, thoughtful, complete and concise.

Questions you may ask

Be ready to ask questions from a prepared list. Techniques for asking good questions begin with the use of open questions. Questions should be developed ahead of time and should reflect the amount of research you have done rather than a lack of research.

Salary questions are usually inappropriate in the first interview. You should research the salary range for the job ahead of time.

At the end of the interview

You must leave the interviewing knowing that you have performed to your best ability and that there are no reservations that you haven't tried to overcome.

The question; "***What reservations do you have?***" is the best to ask.

This is not negative!

How well do I match....? What else do you need to know? What haven't we covered? Etc. will not tell you what the interviewer is actually thinking. If you learn the reservations it gives you the opportunity to overcome them. If you don't do this you'll leave the interview and never be able to overcome the reservations and will have lost the opportunity.

Then set parameters for the next contact: "When may I expect to hear from you?", "What is the next step?"

As you leave it is important to clearly communicate your level of interest – if you're interested, let them know.

After the Interview

- Use the interview as a learning experience. Take notes on what was covered how you can improve next time
- Consider sending an email to thank the interviewer, and stress points of interest and areas in your background that qualify you for the position.

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